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Memorial Service for Carruth J. Wagner, M.D. The 2nd Director of the Indian Health Service from 1962-1965 East Lawn Mortuary Chapel, Sacramento, California

Remarks and Personal Remembrances by

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Dr. Wagner's friends and colleagues speak highly of him and his career in the Indian Health Service. He was the second Director of the Indian Health Service from 1962 until 1965. "Wag" came to the Indian Health Service directorship with considerable training and expertise in management and program planning, along with the vision, interest, and capabilities that the Indian Health Service needed at that time. Under his leadership, Area Offices across Indian country established Offices of Training and Development to help keep Indian Health Service personnel abreast of education and training opportunities in order to increase their knowledge and skills in the management and delivery of health care services.

Dr. Wagner had a major impact on the total Indian Health Service program management system. It was often mentioned that Dr. Wagner worked hard to bring management principles to the Indian Health Service, and his efforts are reflected in the proficient management system that is an integral part of today's Indian Health Service. He emphasized and implemented administration management, training, budgeting and evaluation processes of the health care delivery system. He was responsible for many changes and improvements in the management, operation, and delivery of a comprehensive health care system for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Dr. Wagner was a Diplomat and Fellow of many professional associations and the USPHS. He was a champion for the education and training of health professionals and funded as many as 18 scholarships a year for medical and nursing students, in addition to other awards for health professionals. In order to carry on Dr. Wagner's work, the Carruth J. Wagner, MD Foundation has been established to continue in the funding of education and training for health care workers and professionals.

Dr. Wagner resigned from the Indian Health Service to become the Director of the Bureau of Medical Services. He continued his public health service until his retirement from the U.S. Government in 1968 with 30 years of service. Following his retirement, he continued his career in medicine, retiring again at the age of 84 from his position as the Chief of Medical Policy Evaluation Branch, Department of Health, State of California.

Dr. Wagner was a kind, generous, and concerned individual who was always interested in people and their well being. He was also a dedicated health professional who was described by those who knew him as someone who "touched all those he met and selflessly credited all others for his successes. He was one of those special people who never cared to be remembered by what he accomplished but rather by the people he developed."

Dr. Wagner is part of the fabric of the Indian Health Service and will be remembered for helping the Agency through its early years to meet the health needs of American Indian and Alaska Native people. Dr. Wagner will always be a part of the Indian Health Service family and we salute him today.

Personal remembrances of the Memorial Service for Carruth J. Wagner, M.D., by Margo Kerrigan:

Yesterday I represented the Indian Health Service at the memorial service for Carruth J. Wagner, M.D., at the East Lawn Mortuary Chapel in Sacramento. Dr. Wagner, or "Wag" as he preferred to be called by all, was the second director of the IHS from 1962-1965. I was accompanied by two Commissioned Corps Officers in uniform, CAPT Carol Goodin and LTJG Tammy Colombo.

Dr. Wagner was born September 4, 1916, in Omaha, Nebraska, and passed away on November 25, 2002, in Carmichael, California. He will be inurned at West Lawn Hillcrest Cemetery in Omaha, Nebraska. Dr. Wagner had no surviving family. He was 86.

The memorial service began with full military honors: bagpipes and a 21-gun salute. The American flag was presented to his primary caretaker and friend. After a brief account of his medical education, military service, and public service, the speaker Alan Spilker, who was a long-standing friend, talked about his mentoring to countless health professionals throughout not only his career, but his life. Last year, Dr. Wagner unselfishly funded tuition for 18 nursing students.

I was the first of three to make an oral presentation to a full house of friends and associates. His friends had displayed much of his career memorabilia (degrees, diplomas, awards, etc.) and about 25% of it was dedicated to his Indian Health Service years. There was a picture of him with Dr. Rhoades and the first director of IHS, Dr. Shaw. They had also displayed his Assistant Surgeon General flag, an IHS recognition award with the turquoise IHS medallion, a pair of Plains Indian moccasins, and his IHS biography.

I was followed by two speakers who served with under him as the Director of Medi-Cal for the California State Department of Health Services. Dr. Wagner was a Freemason, and spent time in his career with the Shriners' Hospital in Philadelphia. Ten Masons, wearing their traditional lambskin aprons, were present as a senior ranking Mason, Phil Cox, provided a poetic and uplifting send-off for their "brother" Mason.

After the memorial service ended, we stayed around awhile to talk with people who knew him well. I was told that after Dr. Wagner's IHS assignment he went to Uruguay and implemented a public health system replicating the IHS model. Some people remarked to me how happy they were that the Indian Health Service would come to honor him and that he often spoke about his work with American Indians.

Representing the Indian Health Service at such an important occasion helps me to realize, more than ever, that our efforts are built upon the dedicated careers of others who have gone before us in previous generations. Dr. Wagner was a scholar, researcher, surgeon, and administrator. He left a legacy to us; a stronger Indian Health Service that would eventually be led by health professionals who were American Indians and Alaska Natives themselves. We are a better organization for his leadership and insight.

"Wag's" friends are in the process of setting up the Carruth J. Wagner Foundation to fund scholarships for students of nursing and medicine. I was told that Dr. Wagner hoped some of these awards would go to American Indians. Once the scholarship application package is prepared, perhaps we can help promote the availability of this financial aid to interested Indian students.